The post of officer employee director is presently vacant in five nationalised banks. In six other nationalised banks the tenured of officer employee director has expired but they are continuing to hold directorship in terms of the provisions of the statute pending appointment of their successors. The process of appointment of officer employee directors shall be initiated as soon as the guidelines are finalised.

Decision Regarding Re-Issuance of Licences to Opium Cultivators

2459. SHRI JOY NADUKKARA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry took a decision as noticed in gazette dated 4th October, 1996 regarding allowing re-issuance of licences to opium cultivators who failed to reach the minimum qualifying yield during the crop;

(b) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item in the Times of India dated 27th November, 1996 that the above decision was to help the opium cultivators illegally diverting their produce to the drug market to continue in the business without any penalty; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government thereto and whether Government will reconsider the decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government of India announced the Opium Licensing Policy for the Crop Year 1996-97 vide Gazette Notification dated 4.10.96 raising the Minimum Qualifying Yield (MQY) for licence from 46 kgs. per hectare to 48 kgs. per hectare for the States of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan and fixing the same at 40 kgs. per hectare for Uttar Pradesh in view of the latter having a relatively lower yield. The relaxation in the Minimum Qualifying Yield was only in respect of a small percentage of cultivators who could not achieve the above target but undertook to fulfil it during the current crop year.

(b) and (c) A statement explaining the position is laid on the table of the House.

Statement

Position about the news item regarding 139 Opium cultivation

The newspaper report which appeared in the Times of India dated November 27, 1996 had published incorrect and misleading facts based on wrong presumptions about the Government's Opium Licensing policy for the crop year 1996-97 (1.10.1996 to 30.9.1997).

The opium policy for the year 1996-97 was based, as in previous years on an assessment of the annual requirement of opium and the area required to be licensed to produce the same. As India is the sole producer and supplier of licit opium gum in the World, it is under international obligation to meet the global requirement of opium for medicinal and scientific purposes. The International Narcotics Control Board, which is the concerned United Nations body has been writing to the Govt. of India emphasizing its responsibilities in this regard and the need to build up stocks of opium to provide for future eventualities like crop failure/damage etc.

With the raising of the Minimum Qualifying Yield every year a large number of traditional cultivators had got delicensed over the years on account of their failure to tender the prescribed MQY. To provide for the shortfall in the area and the number of cultivators delicensed every year, the experiment of inducting new cultivators or increasing the size of individual cultivator's licensed area was tried in the previous years but the same had by and large failed. It was noticed that while productivity fell with the increase in the area the induction of new cultivators every year introduced ad hocism in the policy which encouraged corruption and leakage of opium into illicit channel. No

long term relationship or trust could be built in such a state and new set of people were being introduced to opium trade habits every year. The Government of India has, therefore, decided this year to retain, as far as may be the previous years cultivators provided they were not involved in any manner under the NDPS Act, 1985 and the Rules made thereunder, as laid down specifically under Clause 3 of the Policy for the Crop year 1996-97. Almost 75% of the Cultivators licensed this year had fulfilled the prescribed MQY of 48 Kgs or 40 Kgs as the case may be, in the previous year of cultivation. The relaxation in the MQY was only in respect of a small percentage of cultivators who could not achieve the above target but undertook to fulfil it during the current crop year. There is no evidence that such cultivators had diverted their produce to drug market. Opium poppy being a delicate crop susceptible to damage, delicensing of a large number of cultivators every year, who fail to reach the prescribed MQY is quite common. Relief in terms of yield was being granted to such cultivators in the past also.

The said concession in yield was extended with a view to have a continuity in the system and fulfil India's International Commitments as the sole supplier of licit opium. The opium Licensing Policy for the Crop Year 1996-97 was therefore in the long term interest of the country and directed to prevent the prevalent drug abuse.

In view of the above the Government does not propose to review the said policy.

कृषि क्षेत्र के लिए राष्ट्रीयकृत बैंकों द्वारा ऋण

2460. **श्रीमती मालती शर्मा:** क्या वित्त मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) विगत तीन वर्षों के दौरान देश में कृषि क्षेत्र के लिए राष्ट्रीयकृत बैंकों द्वारा दिए गए ऋण का ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ख) क्या सरकार कृषि क्षेत्र के लिए बैंकों के द्वारा अधिक ऋण उपलब्ध कराने पर विचार कर रही है; और

(ग) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है?

वित्त मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री एम० पी० वीरेन्द्र कुमार): (क) भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) द्वारा यथा सूचित, विशेष कृषि ऋण योजनाओं एसएसीपी) के अन्तर्गत पिछले तीन वर्ष के दौरान सरकारी क्षेत्र के बैंकों द्वारा किया गया संवितरण निम्नानुसार है:—

वर्ष	(रुपए करोड़ में)
1994-95	8255.66
1995-96	10172.45
1996-97 (30.09.1996 तक)	5433.86

(ख) और (ग) कृषि क्षेत्र को ऋण का पर्याप्त और समय-पर प्रवाह सुनिश्चित करने के उद्देश्य से भारतीय रिर्जव बैंक और राष्ट्रीय कृषि और ग्रामीण विकास बैंक (नाबार्ड) ने, अन्य बातों के साथ-साथ, निम्नलिखित कदम उठाए हैं:—

(i) सरकारी क्षेत्र के सभी बैंकों से अपेक्षा की जाती है कि वे कृषि क्षेत्र की अग्रिम के रूप में निवल बैंक ऋण का 18 प्रतिशत का लक्ष्य प्राप्त करें;

(ii) वित्तीय वर्ष के दौरान कृषि को ऋण के प्रवाह में स्पष्ट और उल्लेखनीय सुधार लाने के उद्देश्य से सरकारी क्षेत्र के बैंकों द्वारा विशेष कृषि ऋण योजनाएं तैयार की जाती हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त, आरबीआई ने सरकारी क्षेत्र के बैंकों से विशेष कृषि ऋण योजनाओं के अन्तर्गत पिछले वर्ष के संवितरण के मुकाबले अपने संवितरण को 25 प्रतिशत तक बढ़ाने के लिए कहा है।

(iii) दीर्घकालिक कृषि उत्पादन हेतु समय पर और पर्याप्त ऋण सुनिश्चित करने के लिए नकदी ऋण सुविधा के रूप में लचीली स्वीकृत अधिकतम ऋण सीमा प्रदान की जानी होती है।

Debt Service Charges

2461. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 344 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 25th February, 1997 and state: